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ABSTRACT

This report was developed from a task force of education, arts, business and foundation leaders to address the question: What knowledge can research create that will help schools and policy makers provide an appropriate arts education to American students? The report recommends that research be conducted on five aspects of student learning in the arts, including: (1) the effects of arts education on preschool children and how that relates student achievement in the arts and other academic areas; (2) the effects of arts education on preparing students for successful work and careers; (3) the effects of arts education on the academic performance of at-risk student populations; (4) the effects of arts education on student understanding and appreciation of the diversity of cultural traditions in America; and (5) identification of the best instructional practices in the arts along with the most effective methods of professional development for teachers throughout their careers to insure the highest caliber of arts instruction. The report also makes five recommendations for the development and dissemination of information to guide education policy makers in making decisions affecting arts education. (EH)

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Priorities for Arts Education Research

SO 029 172

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Goals 2000 Arts Education Partnership

1997

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To The Reader

A renewed interest in arts education has been stimulated in large measure by public concern over the quality of American schools and the performance of our students. The arts are seen as part of an effective response to that concern.

Congress has included learning in the arts in the national goals for education, and similar policies are being adopted or considered in most every state. Arts educators have agreed on a set of challenging standards which outline expectations for what students should learn and be able to do in the arts. Measuring student arts achievement will now be included in the National Assessment of Educational Progress - the "nation's report card." Underlying these policies is the assumption that all students can and should learn the arts, and that doing so will contribute to their success in school, life and work.

Against this backdrop, the member organizations of the Goals 2000 Arts Education Partnership invited us to chair a task force of education, arts, business and foundation leaders to address the question: *What knowledge can research create that will help schools and policy makers provide an appropriate arts education to American students?*

The following report is the result of our deliberations on this question, with recommendations for ten areas of further research. We believe this report offers important guidance to those who care about the education of our children.

Gordon Cawelti

Milton Goldberg

Gordon Cawelti is a research consultant for the Educational Research Service focusing on the effects of high school restructuring on student achievement. From 1973 to 1992 he was the executive director of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and is recognized worldwide as a leader in the professional development of teachers and administrators. He has been a teacher, principal and school superintendent; the author of more than 150 articles and books; and the editor of the Handbook of Research on Improving Student Achievement.

Milton Goldberg is the executive vice president of the National Alliance of Business. He served as executive director of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, which in 1983 issued the landmark report, A Nation at Risk, *the centerpiece of the education reform movement. He also directed the Congressionally-mandated commission that issued* Prisoners of Time, *exploring how time could be better used to improve student learning. He has served as director of the Office of Research of the U.S. Department of Education as well as a classroom teacher and school administrator.*

Table of Contents

Recommendations iii

Why Teach the Arts? 1

Why Conduct Arts Education Research? 2

New Policies Supporting Arts Education 3

Policy Support for Arts Education Research 4

Setting Priorities, Focusing Resources 5

Focus: Student Learning 6

- Child Development, Student Achievement 7
- Preparing Students for Work 8
- Performance of At-risk Students 9
- Understanding Cultural Traditions 10
- Instructional Practices and Teacher Preparation 11

Focus: Policy Development 12

- National Surveys and Data Collection 13
- Analyzing Public Opinion 14
- Case Studies of States and School Districts 15
- College and Employer Requirements 16
- International Comparisons 17

Getting the Word Out: Making Research Accessible 18

Publications Cited 19

Research Task Force Members 20

Recommendations

Focus: Student Learning

Studies are needed that examine the effects of arts education in enabling students to reach high levels of achievement in the arts and in other academic areas, and in enabling students to develop the skills and attitudes needed to perform successfully in school and in adult roles.

Areas of Research

Studies are needed that examine the effects of arts education on:

- the learning and development of children from birth to age 5
- student achievement in the arts and other academic areas

Studies are needed that examine the effects of arts education on preparing students for successful work and careers.

Studies are needed that examine the effects of arts education on the academic performance of at-risk student populations.

Studies are needed that examine the effects of arts education on student understanding and appreciation of the diversity of cultural traditions in America.

Studies are needed that identify the best instructional practices in the arts along with the most effective methods of professional development for teachers throughout their careers to insure the highest caliber of arts instruction.

Focus: Policy Development

Studies are needed that provide education policy makers with information on the condition of arts education in American schools, public attitudes toward arts education, and the effects of general education policy on arts education.

Areas of Research

The National Center for Education Statistics should conduct periodic surveys and data collection that report trends in the status of K-12 arts education in the United States.

Surveys should be conducted regularly to determine the attitudes of the public, policy makers, employers, parents, school administrators, teachers, and students about arts education.

Case studies are needed of state and local school districts where arts education is strongly supported by education policies and practices (including those related to curriculum, pedagogy and budgeting) in order to determine the conditions required for such support.

Studies are needed of the effects on arts education of college admission requirements, and the hiring criteria set by employers.

Studies are needed that compare the effects of arts education in American schools to those in other countries in the areas of student achievement in the arts, general academic achievement, and other important learning outcomes.

Why Teach the Arts?

The arts are the embodiment of human imagination, the record of human achievement, and the process that distinguishes us as human beings. We form human communities and cultures by making art - through stories and songs, drama and dance, painting and sculpture, architecture and design.

The skills to create these works and to understand their meanings must be taught. Every flourishing culture and civilization has done so for its children, providing the necessary formal instruction. In order to compose, perform, or respond to a poem or piece of music, the human imagination must be awakened, nurtured and trained. The language of the arts - word, sound, visual image, movement, structure - has to be learned and mastered. The way art has been made over time and what it expresses must be illuminated. New works of beauty and delight can then be made and appreciated. Through this process, the child bonds to the human community and acquires the dispositions of adulthood.

Education in the arts is one of the fundamental purposes of schooling.

Why Conduct Arts Education Research?

Research has begun to shed light on the power of the arts in improving the performance of our schools and the achievement of our students. A decade ago, Howard Gardner brought to public attention his work and that of others, demonstrating that we learn in a variety of ways through multiple "languages." A breakthrough line of research is uncovering the processes of how the human brain functions, and the role stimuli provided through the arts play in healthy brain development. The implications of this new knowledge for the role of the arts in teaching and learning is profound.

Other studies have begun to establish links between actively learning an art form and student motivation and ability to learn other skills; for instance, reading, mathematics and writing. Research also has linked participation in the arts to other important educational outcomes, such as positive student engagement in the school community, appreciation of cultural differences and more active community service.

These findings harbor great promise for improving the performance of our schools and the success of our students. But more research is needed. A clear vision needs to be articulated to the research community and to policy makers about the areas of greatest promise and importance. We offer such a focus in this report. The challenge now is to take action.

To the research community, this report is a call to accelerate the work of understanding the power of the arts in education. To policy makers, the report is a call to base decisions on this new knowledge. To organizations that fund research, it is a call to make these areas of study a top priority so that our children soon feel the benefits.

New Policies Supporting Arts Education

A number of recent legislative and policy actions at national and state levels have supported the need to research the condition and effects of arts education in American schools.

- The United States Congress in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 declared the arts in the national interest by including them as part of a core curriculum for students to achieve high levels of knowledge and performance.

- The National Assessment of Educational Progress, the national testing program mandated by Congress, must measure what students know and are able to do in these core curricular areas. The National Assessment Governing Board has announced its intention to conduct a comprehensive assessment in the visual and performing arts in 2007.

- The professional associations of teachers of music, dance, theater and the visual arts have reached an unprecedented consensus on what students should be expected to learn and achieve in the arts in grades K-12, called the National Standards for Arts Education. A companion effort of the professions, coordinated by the Council of Chief State School Officers, agreed on how these expectations should be measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

- Responding to the demand of employers, parents and the general public, legislative and educational governing bodies in virtually every state are setting statewide standards to raise levels of student achievement in the subject areas deemed essential to student success in school, life and work. By May 1997, forty-six states adopted or announced the intention to adopt standards that include the arts.

These affirmations of the arts as important to student learning mark a significantly new level of commitment by policy makers to arts education for all students. A substantially increased body of knowledge about the current status of arts teaching and learning in American schools and the identification of the most effective arts education practices for all students is now required. This will make it possible to delineate the important role of arts education in fulfilling the goals of education in the 21st century. Creating this knowledge-base is the role of research.

Policy Support for Arts Education Research

Recent federal policy statements show a new level of interest in arts education research.

- Studies funded by the National Institutes of Health, particularly those on the physical, psychological and social development of young children, are yielding findings of value to arts education, including data on the types of stimulation most important to brain development.

- In its 1996 report *Building Knowledge for a Nation of Learners*, the U.S. Department of Education proposed seven general priority areas for increasing knowledge through research. The Department expressed an interest, for example, in research on the development of creativity, on appropriate developmental experiences that prepare children for school learning, on community linkages that improve the learning environment, and on effective teaching practices. Studies of arts education are germane to each of these areas.

- Beginning with *Toward Civilization* , published in 1988, the National Endowment for the Arts has issued a series of policy statements in the last decade which express its commitment to arts education and to arts education research. In cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education, the Endowment convened arts educators and researchers in 1994 to develop an *Arts Education Research Agenda for the Future*, an extensive list of the curricular and pedagogical questions that could be addressed in examining the arts in schooling. In 1995, the Endowment published *Schools, Communities and the Arts*, a compendium of some of the most useful arts education studies and their results. This compendium suggests areas worthy of future inquiry.

Professional associations in the fields of music and visual art education have established agendas for research in their specific disciplines. The International Music Products Association (NAMM) has been the largest non-governmental source of funding for scientific research in music, yielding important findings on music instruction and brain development. NAMM is establishing the International Foundation for Music Research. Similarly, the National Art Education Association has created a foundation to support research in the visual arts.

Foundations and corporations such as the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the GE Fund, the Knight Foundation and the Lila Wallace/Readers Digest Fund support work on the impact of arts education on general education. And organizations with specific arts education interests, such as the Getty Education Institute for the Arts, the Kenan Institute for the Arts and the Galef Institute, support major evaluations of the programs they support.

These public and private activities are important, though the aggregate funding committed to arts education research is still modest relative to the needs of the field. A much larger financial investment is needed.

Setting Priorities, Focusing Resources

The Goals 2000 Arts Education Partnership is a coalition of education, arts, business and funding organizations concerned with the role of the arts in helping all students achieve high levels of academic, personal, social and career success; and in improving the quality and performance of American schools.

Partnership organizations authorized the formation of a Task Force on Research in May 1996. They asked the Task Force to clarify the need for research on arts education and to define priority areas that could stimulate public and private funding to independent researchers conducting valid studies in these areas.

Two broad areas of consensus arose from the Task Force's deliberations.

• **Student Learning.** Studies are needed on the effects of arts education in enabling students to reach high levels of achievement in the arts and in other academic areas, and to develop the skills and attitudes needed to perform successfully in school and in adult roles in the 21st century.

Studies of this type would focus primarily on learning and teaching practices as they relate to five priority concerns discussed on the following pages.

• **Policy Development.** Studies are needed that provide education policy makers with information on the condition of arts education in American schools, public attitudes toward arts education, and the effects of general education policy on arts education.

Studies of this type would focus on developing information of greatest significance for the setting of education policies. Five priority areas for developing this information are recommended.

The ten priority areas are discussed on the following pages. The Partnership urges public and private funders to adopt these priorities as they commit resources to arts education research in the coming decade. The Partnership also urges that research findings published in each of these areas be disseminated in an accessible form to education policy makers, practitioners, and the general public.

FOCUS:
Student Learning

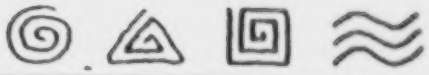
Studies are needed that examine the effects of arts education in enabling students to reach high levels of achievement in the arts and in other academic areas, and in enabling students to develop the skills and attitudes needed to perform successfully in school and in adult roles.

Important research in arts education has been summarized in two national compilations published in 1995 and 1996.

A Handbook of Research on Improving Student Achievement, published by the Alliance for Curriculum Reform (a coalition of education associations), describes effective practices in teaching the arts disciplines.

Schools, Communities and the Arts: A Research Compendium, commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts and prepared by the Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University, discusses forty-nine research reports on education in the arts, and the relationship between arts education and other educational goals.

We strongly urge the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education to commission such compilations on a regular basis. We also urge that the priority areas we recommend in this report be used to categorize the findings in the compilations.



• Student Learning

Studies are needed that examine the effects of arts education on:

• the learning and development of children from birth to age 5

A child's learning and development from birth to kindergarten is critical to later success. Educational development and child psychology have been greatly enhanced by recent research on the brain and the types of stimulation important to its growth. Education and public policy makers have responded to these findings by making "school readiness" a major concern and the first of the National Education Goals. Researchers are citing the role of music, dance, story and images in stimulating child development and creating important bonds between child, parent and family.

Therefore we urge that studies of the effects of the arts on child development and learning be a priority for future research.

• student achievement in the arts and other academic areas

By including the arts in the core of subject areas deemed important for every student, Congress and state policy makers affirm that, as with other core subject areas, there is a basic level of literacy that all students can and should attain in the arts. Beyond these fundamental skills, students should also be challenged to reach even higher levels of achievement.

The knowledge, skills and habits of mind acquired in studying a core subject are understood to be applicable to learning in other areas (such as mathematics to science) and to future success in life. Several lines of research flow from these assumptions. What should students learn and be able to do in the arts and how can this knowledge and skill be taught? How does arts education develop a child's ability to sense, feel and construct meaning? What is the relationship between learning the arts and learning other content areas? How is learning in the arts a preparation for adult roles?

Most research on the arts has focused on the first of these questions. That focus should remain a priority. Promising work on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in the arts disciplines should attract significant research resources.

But research on the other questions is of increasing importance to education practitioners and policy makers. Findings on the relationship between arts education and learning to read, write and compute, for example, have drawn significant attention. Support is needed to further investigate these relationships.

• Student Learning

Studies are needed that examine the effects of arts education on preparing students for successful work and careers.

Two lines of research are needed on the effects of arts education in helping students prepare for employment.

One line of research should examine the requirements of arts-specific jobs (such as graphic design, architecture, fashion, entertainment) in the public and private sectors to determine if school curriculum and pedagogy are appropriately aligned to these requirements.

> A 1994 study by the National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies (now Americans for the Arts) reports that there are 1.3 million jobs generated by the arts in the not-for-profit sector. But no study has been done to identify the categories and numbers of job opportunities in the private and public sectors for persons trained in the arts. The skill sets for these jobs also need to be defined.

A second line of research should examine the effects of arts education on developing the skills required for jobs not normally associated with the arts. Such studies would be analogous to research on the role of reading, writing or mathematics to job performance.

In 1991, the Secretary's Commission on Acquiring Necessary Skills (SCANS) of the U.S. Department of Labor published its report *What Work Requires of Schools*, listing the skills, competencies and habits deemed crucial for workforce success by American business. The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities in its 1997 report, *Creative America*, argues that many of those skills are essential components of arts education: thinking creatively, making decisions and solving problems, among them. A central question for researchers is how these skills can be enhanced through arts education.

• Student Learning

Studies are needed that examine the effects of arts education on the academic performance of at-risk student populations.

A number of factors have been cited as contributing to the academic success of children from socio-economic groups that have historically experienced difficulty in schooling. Among those are some that are intrinsic to the best practices in arts education, such as expectations for high achievement coupled with the opportunities for progressive mastery of content and skills, hands-on engagement in learning tasks, attention to individual learning styles, cooperative and team learning approaches, and active parental involvement in the educational process.

The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities in its 1996 report *Coming Up Taller* reported that at-risk youth showed increased motivation to learn and improved academic performance when participating in after-school and weekend arts education programs.

A central research area to be pursued is the further investigation of the particular aspects of arts education that can contribute to the effective education of at-risk students.

• Student Learning

Studies are needed that examine the effects of arts education on student understanding and appreciation of the diversity of cultural traditions in America.

America is a pluralistic society with an array of cultures that express their traditions, customs, beliefs and values in and through the arts. Instruction in these art forms illuminates how meaning is captured in song, story, dance, image and material. Literacy in these symbolic expressions allows us to understand the perspectives that are communicated by an individual or cultural group.

This ability to appreciate and communicate across cultures is the basis for mutual respect in a civil society. As a nation open to continuing immigration and, therefore, open to the presence of ever more cultural groups, the potential of the arts to contribute to a vibrant civil society demands our attention.

An important research question to be pursued, therefore, is how arts education can contribute to understanding among cultural groups in America.

• Student Learning

Studies are needed that identify the best instructional practices in the arts along with the most effective methods of professional development for teachers throughout their careers to insure the highest caliber of arts instruction.

Arts instruction in American schools is provided both by teachers trained in the arts disciplines and by teachers trained in other subject areas. Their teaching may be supplemented by artists and cultural organizations in the community. If quality instruction in the arts is to be provided to all students, the following types of research are needed:

- Studies that identify the most effective classroom practices in teaching the arts, and the support systems that are needed to encourage teachers to use them.

The Alliance for Curriculum Reform in its 1996 *Handbook* summarizes findings on effective teaching practices in the arts. These lines of research should be further developed. The body of knowledge from educational research on how to improve teacher performance should also be applied and studied in arts education.

- Studies that examine the effects of alternative approaches to pre-service education on the teaching performance of arts specialists and classroom teachers, as measured by student learning.

- Studies that identify the most effective uses of technology in the teaching of the arts.

- Studies that identify effective models of arts instruction involving in-school and out-of-school personnel and resources.

FOCUS:
Policy Development

Studies are needed that provide education policy makers with information on the condition of arts education in American schools, public attitudes toward arts education, and the effects of general education policy on arts education.

There are conflicting views about the extent, quality and purpose of arts education in American schools. A legislator or school board member poised to make a decision on an arts education curriculum or budget is largely functioning in the realm of perception.

Therefore, we urge that a second focus of arts education research be on making solid and reliable information available to policy makers.

• Policy Development

The National Center for Education Statistics should conduct periodic surveys and data collection that report trends in K-12 arts education, in the United States.

No one knows how much time American children spend studying the arts. Nor is it clear whether they are taught by teachers trained in the arts, by general classroom teachers, or by artists. Or whether children in Minnesota are taught more or less of the arts than those in Maine. Or whether students know more and can do more or less now in the arts than in the past.

Congress asks the National Center for Education Statistics, a branch of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education, to gather data on the condition of American education and report it to the nation. With funding support from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Center conducted a "Fast Response Statistical Survey" of arts education (a method of gathering information quickly through a mailing to a random sample of 1500 school principals) and reported the results in 1995 in *Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools*. No trend analysis is possible from this single report, nor is the report comprehensive in its scope.

We urge the Center to include the status of arts education in its data collection and to report it regularly so that trend analyses can be made of arts course offerings, enrollments in arts classes, the composition of the teaching force, the resources available for arts instruction, and other factors regularly gathered for other subject areas.

• Policy Development

Surveys should be conducted regularly to determine the attitudes of the public, policy makers, employers, parents, school administrators, teachers, and students about arts education.

Polls conducted by reputable public opinion research firms report that there is strong support among parents of school-aged children for arts education. Similarly, general opinion polling reports that taxpayers support public funding for arts education. In contrast, school boards and legislative bodies normally have not included the arts as part of the required curriculum for students and often make arts programs a first target of budget cutting. In some cases, budget cuts produce an outcry from parents and concerned segments of the public; in others, they do not.

Finer-grained studies are needed to probe the views of legislators, school board members, school administrators, parents, teachers and students on the role of the arts in schooling. Similarly, more in-depth analyses are needed of the views of important segments of the taxpaying public. Comparisons across these studies would yield important insights for policy development.

We urge public and private funders to support careful opinion survey research that clarifies the comparative views of important subsets of the population concerning arts education.

• Policy Development

Case studies are needed of state and local school districts where arts education is strongly supported by education policies and practices (including those related to curriculum, pedagogy and budgeting) in order to determine the conditions required for such support.

School districts and individual schools throughout the United States have arts education programs that are recognized for their quality and their impact on students. Similarly, some state education systems have been recognized for implementing arts education policies, requirements and assessments for all students — Kentucky offering the best known current example.

Research is needed on the policy and legislative approaches that have been used to improve arts education in these districts and the extent to which successful approaches may be applicable in other settings.

State and local school authorities are setting new content and performance standards, and implementing student assessment systems often tied to accountability reports to the public on school performance. These strategies for bringing about comprehensive school improvement flow from several decades of educational research and are promising developments. An important research area is the analysis of intended and unintended effects of such policies and strategies on arts education.

• Policy Development

Studies are needed of the effects on arts education of college admission requirements, and the hiring criteria set by employers.

College entrance requirements are a major influence in shaping school curriculum, particularly that of the high school. Admissions requirements are adjusted in response to educational, social and legal considerations. Are there positive or negative effects on arts education as a result of these changes? A central question is how admission requirements might foster arts education in elementary and secondary schools.

The real and perceived demands of employers - what private and public sector employers consider important for graduates to know and be able to do - are an important part of the policy debate on school curriculum. For instance, in 1996 a national "summit" of governors and corporate CEOs issued a call for "world class standards" for schools and urged employers to set hiring criteria that would encourage high levels of student learning. What have been the effects of these actions on arts education?

• Policy Development

Studies are needed that compare the effects of arts education in American schools to those in other countries in the areas of student achievement in the arts, general academic achievement, and other important learning outcomes.

International comparisons of educational systems and student achievement have become increasingly important to education policy makers. It is in the national interest to graduate students capable of sustaining a leadership role for the United States in global affairs. And it is in the personal interest of students to be capable of competing in a global economy. Therefore, it is important to know what students are learning and able to do in other nations and to examine the educational systems, curriculum, pedagogy and funding that yield those results.

A key research question for arts education is to determine the long term intellectual and social effects on the citizens of other countries that are known to have strong arts programs in their schools. A specific line of inquiry would be the analysis of the economic performance of industries that rely on knowledge and skill in the arts: entertainment, fashion, architecture, advertising and the like. What are the effects of arts education in other nations on their global position in these and other industries?

Getting the Word Out: Making Research Accessible

The information and knowledge created by the studies we have recommended in this report must be shared with policy makers and practitioners so it can be put to use. To do so, we urge the following:

- The U.S. Department of Education in conjunction with the National Endowment for the Arts should create or commission a database of studies conducted in the priority areas we have recommended. The database should be accessible on the Internet.

- The National Endowment for the Arts should regularly commission a compilation of important findings in the priority areas and publish the compilation in print and disk formats, as well as making it available on the Internet. Publications of interest to key audiences - such as legislators, school boards, administrators, teachers and parents - should be produced summarizing major points in these findings.

- Organizations that fund arts education research should establish a common database of important findings from this work, either independently or in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Arts.

- The National Endowment for the Arts should explore with other federal agencies that fund research pertinent to arts education - for instance, the National Institutes of Health - a process where relevant findings are incorporated into the arts education research database.

- Research, education and arts organizations should cooperate in adding findings to the arts education database and should regularly disseminate arts education research findings to their memberships.

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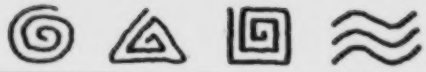
27



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